

## Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth Jain School:

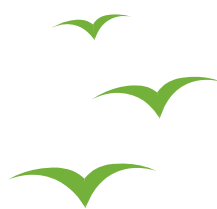
Empowering our Children to Become the Ambassadors of Tomorrow







Five year old Krish entered the school gates one early September day firmly clutching his father's hand, nervous yet excited as any child would be on the first day of attending a new school. He was reassured by the fact that this was a voluntary school and there was no compulsion to attend. He could simply stop coming if he did not enjoy himself! What Krish had not anticipated was that ten years later he would be graduating from this school and how it would become very much part of his life and that of his family, a school which had cultivated in him a lifetime of learning and giving. It had been a special experience, of value to him long after he had ceased walking through its doors, an experience which had given him the confidence and the practical and value based education to make better choices in today's competitive and stressful world. This school, which runs in London and Nairobi, is Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth Jain School (SCVP), bestowed with the spiritual blessings of Acharya Shri Chandanaji Maharaj and Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji Maharaj, so that whoever attends the school and is fortunate enough to tap into their grace, has an indelible imprint left upon them for an entire lifetime. But what is it that distinguishes this school and makes Krish and his parents, and others like them, have the energy, enthusiasm and commitment to make this school a part of their lives?





## Innovation in learning and teaching at every turn.....

Krish and others following in his footsteps will find during their time at the school that innovation and relevance are the cornerstones of the learning and teaching.

The ethos of the school is very much focused in developing an understanding of Jain principles and philosophy and the importance of imbibing good values in one's life through questioning, discussion and experiencing rather than slavishly accepting what is taught.

The syllabus is unique having been drawn up by Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji with the benefit of her experience and wisdom having travelled the world and seen the challenges of modern life for those living outside India. The need to promote family values such as respect, to maintain cultural and religious traditions but adapted to modern living, the importance of a non-sectarian outlook concentrating on similarities and not differences and the conviction of following universal good values permeate the syllabus. The aim is to build and strengthen faith through practice of selfless giving, love and compassion. The topics addressed in classes, with the depth depending on the age group in question, include:

- Early identification of being a Jain
- To instill faith in the Jain philosophy
- To learn and understand the meaning of prayers
- Building self-respect, self-esteem and confidence in students
- Instill life long values which can be applied in daily living
- To learn about and experiment with key Jain principles.

*'I loved Veerayatan's approach to teaching Jainism, because it centred around real understanding through questioning.' (ex SCVP student)*

*'...the SCVP classes give us time to explore new modes of thinking and debate topics without fear of scrutiny....' (Adult student)*

The teachers of SCVP are highly knowledgeable, not just teaching at SCVP but also reaching out to the community at large. For instance, SCVP South London teachers form part of the Education Team of One Jains UK, whilst teachers in Kenya regularly visit various Jain communities to teach.

The teaching methods used by the experienced teachers are innovative and apt for the different age groups: for older children, presentations, projects, meditation and discussion including the use of Mind-Maps bring out their questioning mindset and address subjects such as modern science which challenge their faith; for younger children interactive learning delivered by teachers using stories, skits, arts and crafts and music brings vitality and variety and ensures the children look forward to attending the school each week.

*'I have learnt about non-violence, jealousy, controlling feelings. Learning about Jainism has changed me as I sometimes used to step on an ant or a bee before I had joined, but now I would hate to. I really believe in non-violence ..... I have also learned how to control feelings especially jealousy.'* (Student)

At all stages of their journey through the school, students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour towards others and their actions and thoughts towards other people, the environment and themselves.

Tremendous importance is placed in ensuring that the knowledge imparted is not 'bookish', but practical and life changing; for this to occur experiential learning is all important. So Krish will take part in one of the school trips to an old people's care home where children recite prayers and interact with the residents to find out more about their life stories, thereby learning to converse and developing an interest and respect for these residents. Through active seva work, whether it is tree planting or serving food at Ayambil or supporting the students in the adopted Dada School in Kenya, the value of giving is embedded in students. The visits to India organized by the school are especially important, with students taking an active part in seva activities such as helping at the eye hospital, teaching and interacting with the children attending the Veerayatan schools in Bihar and Kutch and seeing how they live, all of which brings perspective into their own lives.





*'SCVP has been an enlightening experience. It not only taught me about my religion, Jainism, but also taught me precious life values that I continue to use. Simple teachings like forgiveness, kindness, and compassion have changed my life completely. I now perform each task with a purpose and greatly appreciate all that I have, however small it may be. SCVP exposed me to the other side of the world, one I would have never understood otherwise. Various community service projects have been eye opening, especially the experience at Veerayatan, and SCVP became my stepping stone towards giving back to the community. I treasure the values learnt and practice them daily. My life would not have been as prosperous as it is today without SCVP.'* (Student)

*I can say from personal experience that SCVP truly is a place where children are instilled with values so that they grow up respecting their parents, grandparents, family and friends. It is a place where children are empowered and motivated to cultivate the value of selfless giving and volunteering; a place where leaders of the future are created to benefit society in the UK and the wider world.'* (Parent)

*'... I am really proud that some children felt confident enough to start Jain Assemblies in their mainstream schools and expose non-Jains to the beauty of Jain philosophy...'* (Teacher)

*'...We are delighted in the way our children Rishabh and Khilan have flourished at the school, due to the learning environment and culture. The values of the school have allowed them to express themselves and ask challenging questions in their journey of learning the principles of Jainism. Furthermore they have developed all round capabilities of working in a community; respecting different view points, working as a team and supporting events...'* (Parent and teacher)

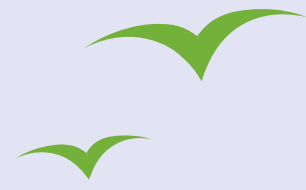


A unique feature of the school is that Krish when he graduates will become a youth teacher an opportunity to work alongside experienced teachers in classes and learn to take responsibility and contribute immensely in making the teaching relevant to today's students.

Krish's dad attends the adult class, so giving an opportunity for the whole family to experience learning together and tighten the family bonds, bonds which are strengthened further through participation in an array of school activities, including summer camps, fun days to raise money for good causes and Diwali chopda poojan.

Every SCVP event has a spiritual perspective. The beautiful rituals of Samayik and Pratikraman (in English for all 8 days during Paryushan) are uniquely presented using modern techniques to ensure that everyone, young and old, understand the deeper reasons behind these rituals, the meanings of the various sutras and are therefore able to carry out spiritual introspection. Sutras are recited in their original language and in English and with everyone encouraged to recite together there is most definitely a contemporary slant and a sense of togetherness.





## The difference the school is making to lives.....

Krish will interact during his time at SCVP with not only other students, but with youth teachers, ex-students, adult class members, teachers, volunteers, and committee members – and he will find that each considers their time at the school to be highly rewarding and in many ways life transforming.

Teaching is seen by the teachers to be a joy, with more being gained by the teacher than is imparted by them.

*‘I think a special thing for me (although there are many special things) is that it is so nice when we hear of a student who has finished school and is working now – even has his/ her own little children – and they remember that they attended SCVP school and their teacher! That is so warming. It means that something we said/ taught them must have impacted in their lives for them to remember us!’*

*‘It has been a wonderful and joyous journey when alongside teaching the children, personal learning about the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir is enhanced.’*

Ex-students have found the learning to be lifelong and not a chapter which closes when they graduate from the school. For those who take on the responsibility of being a youth teacher, the benefits are even more tangible.

*‘I went to SCVP as a student for 7 years, and then taught there for 3 years as a Youth Teacher. I was also the first Youth Teacher Co-ordinator. So during those formative years, SCVP was a major part of my life. I enjoyed being there at the time – it was the best way to see many of my friends on a regular basis – but it’s only since then that I’ve realised what it has given me. The teachings of Jainism have given me a sense of where I stand in the wider world, a sense of perspective and a belief that we are all souls and should treat each other as souls. That’s fed into my professional life, my volunteering life, and my personal life. I suppose without SCVP, I would have found a way through all of this anyway, but there is no doubt that it has informed so much of what I do that I can’t imagine just how much more difficult it would have been.’*

*‘...I am now more rooted in our culture and values...’*

*‘As part of our daily lives, we all come across ethical dilemmas, where we have to weigh up lots of conflicting concepts or personal priorities. For me, I feel that I can critically appraise these scenarios, and be honest about any compromises I may make. Whilst this may sound disheartening, this honesty allows me to be aware of what I do, and make goals to improve with time.’*



And to show that it is never too late to start on the path of spiritual purification and strive to bring the good values into our lives, adult class members have cited personal development as a result of attending the classes.

*‘It had brought lots of changes in my inner self. I was very short tempered but after attending Jain classes I find I have become more humble, kind, caring and helpful to people. This is a real good achievement in my life.’*

*‘...I have learnt to respect others and treat them the same way as we expect from them.... The present moment is precious so make the most of it.’*

*‘Attending the classes has had manifold effects on my day-to-day life – most of them rather subtle, but two with greater impact. Firstly, I now have courage to forgo rituals for rituals sake and try to ensure I follow them with understanding and “bhav”. The second is being more sanguine in the face of the rather minor usual day-to-day difficulties.’*

One trustee of Veerayatan UK who has enormous experience of working with different community organisations has particular fondness for his work for SCVP.

*‘Many large and small events have taken place in my time here at SCVP. Almost all have challenges of one kind or another but what really matters is that the ‘team SCVP ‘ is always ready for the challenge and always delivers when it matters. The bonding of the team is amazing. Whether it’s a presentation skills workshop, a Diwali programme, Paryushan, Sadhviji’s visits, Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, a garba or musical night or the school fun day and much more, every event is magical. When you can bring a smile or make a difference to someone, you know it’s been worth the effort.’*



## Jain Classes – The perfect end to a hectic week....

SCVP is renowned for being family orientated with the opportunity to meet like-minded people; for being non-sectarian, promoting the similarities that exist amongst all Jains and the teachings of Tirthankar Mahavir, which the younger generation find refreshing and attractive; and also for being welcoming and inclusive.



*‘As with many parents, we joined the adult Jain classes as a consequence of enrolling our children to attend their classes. What struck me immediately is how welcoming the classes were even though we did not know many people there. There is a distinct atmosphere of inclusiveness and friendliness that I have seldom experienced elsewhere. After the first few classes, it dawned on me that the classes were also distinctly non-denominational – I, to this day after 5 years, still have no idea who of my fellow classmates are Digambar, Svetambar, Deravasi, Sthanakvasi etc. Coming from a community where such distinctions are engrained in all of us at a young age, it was refreshingly liberating to be considered as just “Jain”. (Adult class student)*

*Lastly, I have to admit that I also look forward to Jain classes on Friday evenings just to meet all the fellow students, teachers and their kids – it has become part of our social lives. It is a welcome punctuation to the week where I meet old and new friends, learn a bit more about Jainism and recharge the spirit for the next week.’  
(Adult class student)*

Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji has the following firm conviction which the work undertaken at SCVP is addressing, that:

**A child’s mind is awake and fertile.  
With proper guidance it will be able  
To differentiate between good and bad;  
It will respond to the challenge of life  
Itself and the challenge to achieve and  
to succeed.  
There are no boundaries. There are no limits.**



## The value of the work of SCVP Jain School as described by community leaders in UK and in Kenya

Deepa Doshi, Shree Sthanakvasi Jain Sangh, Nairobi, Chair:

*SCVP has had a profound impact on the understanding and practice of Jainism in Kenya, especially amongst children and the youth. When SCVP commenced in Kenya the only Jain religion classes available for children were at the Derasar in the form of Pathshala with the emphasis being primarily on following rituals without any understanding on the reasons for the rituals. As a child I remember my mother asking me to attend the Pathshala classes at the derasar. After attending one class I refused to go again. Nothing my mother said could change my mind!*

*I am glad to say that my daughter's path has been different: The introduction of SCVP classes in Nairobi and Thika has given children an opportunity to learn about Jainism in a fun way with the meaning behind the prayers, sutras and rituals performed. The interest created in children about basic Jain values led them to discuss these principles with their parents. Many parents felt that they didn't know enough to answer their children's inquisitive questions. Following many requests to start classes for adults, SCVP now offer adult classes in Gujarati and English. SCVP also carry out Pratikraman with meaning in English during Paryushan and this has renewed the interest in Jain Festivals.*

*Gurus of good child development tell us that for the holistic growth of a child, parents need to focus on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth of a child. The current education system provides coaching for physical and mental growth and some emotional growth as well. However, spiritual growth is often lacking in children of today. SCVP provides a firm foundation in the spiritual growth of a child such that when they are adults they will have a sound set of values to guide them in their day to day living. Values such as compassion and non violence will be deeply embedded in them from a very young age.*

*As Shree Sthanakvasi Jain Sangh, Nairobi we have also received great support from the teachers of SCVP during Paryushan for leading the Pratikraman in English with meaning and giving discourses in English for our youth. We are truly grateful to SCVP for the work they are doing in Kenya. Congratulations to the SCVP team and keep up the good work!*





**Mahesh Shah (Religious Chair) of Oshwal Association UK (OAUK) North West:**

*OAUK North West (NW) were privileged to have SCVP deliver two key programmes for us during last Paryushan i.e. Pratikraman in English & Paryushan for Kids (P4K). It is very crucial to pass on the knowledge in a format and language that our young people who are the future can grasp, and that's what the SCVP are skilled in delivering. We greatly appreciate SCVP team for delivering such a wonderful P4K workshop where we had over 70 children participating in the workshop.*

*It was a first time for OAUK NW to have the English pratikraman for all 8 days, delivered by the SCVP team. This proved to be a great success with very good attendance averaging 150 with highest being 270 for the last day. Lots of positive feedback was received from the attendees.*

*We pray for the success of the SCVP team in imparting the Jain knowledge to our next generation.*

**Bhupendra Shah, Board of Advisors Chair, Navnat Vanik Association of the UK:**

*SCVP is best organised and efficient in promoting Jain values in United Kingdom. The dedicated voluntary service of its teachers and trustees is commendable. Its services are much needed by the community and have helped many children, youths and elderly parents to understand and practice the principles of Jainism. We wish further success to SCVP and recommend full support from all Jains.*

**Anjali Varaiya, Young Jains, Nairobi, Chair:**

*21 years and going strong....*

*Under the guidance of Acharya Shri Chandanaji and the sadhvijis of Veeryatan, Shri Chandana Vidyapeeth Nairobi was established in the year 1997.*

*It was one of the first institutions to provide structural course in Jainism in Kenya. It is successfully running for two decades. The current registered students' (adult and children) is 250, with over 300 who have graduated and more than a 1000 who have benefited from the classes that run in Gujarati and English for both children between the age of four and a half years to 16 years and for adults.*

*In the era of "Why, what and where" it is very important that all traditions and practices are communicated and explained in the most practical manner and I believe SCVP is doing complete justice.*

*The voluntary teachers are giving their selfless services to ensure that the message of Lord Mahavir and the principles of Jainism are well explained to the students via various fun, artistic and captivating mediums. I still remember most of the lessons taught to me almost 18 years back when I was attending the classes at SCVP, and these are the lessons that have guided me in various stages of life.*

*The modern approach has encouraged many to explore and understand the meaning and importance of our festivals, rituals and most importantly believe in the message of Lord Mahavir and Jainism at large. This I believe plays a vital role in shaping the life of our youth at a very tender age and will act as a support system in their future as the teachings will play the role of a "GPS" in their walk of life.*

*SCVP is also a platform whereby individuals are given an opportunity to discover their talents and build confidence, thus it is not only a school for spiritual growth but also personal growth.*

*I take this opportunity to thank the committee members, teachers, students, parents and donors for their invaluable support. To the rest – I urge and warmly welcome all to attend and benefit from the various classes.*

**Dr Mehoolbhai Sanghrajka, Director and Trustee of the Institute of Jainology:**

*I was part of the group that founded the SCVP School in the mid 1990s. At that time the school was unique in that it was the first to offer a Jain curriculum in contemporary English using modern day examples.*

*The children benefited greatly in learning this ancient faith using modern, western education techniques. The Jain community has benefitted too by having a generation that has grown up practicing Jain values and having a compassionate outlook on life.*

*It is very important that SCVP continues to provide such important learnings to coming generations and to continue to practice Jainism in a modern way that engages young people and teaches them our important faith.*

*We at the IOJ wish SCVP every success in this endeavour.*





In London SCVP is run by Veerayatan UK and in Nairobi, it is run by Young Jains, Kenya.

For more information on SCVP classes and events, please contact:

**Nairobi:**

Leenaben Shah: [leena@insightconsultancy.net](mailto:leena@insightconsultancy.net)

Ritaben Sanghrajka: [ritasanghrajka@hotmail.com](mailto:ritasanghrajka@hotmail.com)

**North London:**

Nileshbhai Kothari: [nilesh.kothari@bt.com](mailto:nilesh.kothari@bt.com)

Pramitbhai Shah: [pramit70@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pramit70@yahoo.co.uk)

**South London:**

Prakashbhai Patalia: [prakashpatalia@me.com](mailto:prakashpatalia@me.com)

